

The Ballarat Naturalist

April 2014



Members' Images – Seascapes.

Seven members brought along about ten wonderful photos, each with a broad-ranging marine theme which they described as they were projected onto the wall. Besides the following members who submitted notes Ken Hammond's photos included seascapes around Port Douglas and Jane Marriott's photos included many fascinating patterns in rock along the seashores. Below is a brief commentary of the images shown by the other five members at the AGM.

Carol showed images of Albatrosses and Giant Petrels taken on two visits to New Zealand, its territories and Macquarie Island. At Kaikoura north of Christchurch, tourist boats travel just a few kilometres offshore where bait



towed behind the boat attracts pelagic bird species such as Wandering and Buller's Albatrosses and Northern Giant Petrels, with the Wandering Albatross, wingspan 3-3.5m, top of the pecking order! At sea around the sub-Antarctic islands of The Snares and Campbell Island, Wandering, White-capped, Campbell and Southern Royal Albatrosses followed the ship.

On Campbell Island we saw nesting Southern Royals, while on Macquarie Island Northern Giant Petrels fed on the carcass of an Elephant Seal, defending it from Skuas.

Val Hocking showed some views from a recent trip to WA, firstly of Cape Leewin and the lighthouse, being the most SW point of Australia, followed by views of Rottnest Island including a large Osprey nest, one of 3 made by the resident population. One huge stack is estimated to be about 70 years old.

She then showed a few photos of the fauna of the Galapagos Islands including marine iguanas, sea lions and some fur seals which if it weren't for the cooler current coming up from Southern Peru, wouldn't be able to survive here.



Clare Dalman's report: Sometimes days in the bush are unusually rewarding. One such afternoon was in the NSW south coast, near Durras Lake and Murrumbidgee National Park. We watched a pied oyster catcher behaving oddly and soon realised it was sitting on a "nest" – a slight sandcrape with a beautifully marked egg. Kangaroos grazed along the beach, rock patterns on the shore were beautiful, tiny masked lapwings were scaring their parents and a diamond python blocking our steps was scaring me too much to step over it. An appealing small lizard then approached on our path. A lovely afternoon.

Peter's pictures were mostly from the 2004 ANN trip to Western Australia, taken en route and post gathering. They included views from cliffs of the Great Australian Bight close to where he watched whales. Some coastal views around Esperance and Cape Le Grand National Park were included.

Further up the Western Australian coast he were fascinated by the extensive and deep shell beaches near Shark Bay. Near here were the ancient stromatalites and dolphins at Monkey Mia. Peter concluded with mud skippers at Karumba at the Gulf of Carpentaria, taken on a 2008 trip.

John Gregurke's photos showed many plants, some growing on the cliff top at Point Addis. Other photos were of sights around Pt Lonsdale and the cliffs at Anglesea.

Subscriptions are now due

Should you wish to pay your membership at a bank or on line, our bank details are :

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc., Bendigo Bank, **BSB 633 108**
Account no. 1191 12290 ***Please remember to add your name***

Ordinary member \$35 Family \$55

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Newsletter postage (Ordinary member) \$8*



President's Report to Annual General Meeting, 7 Mar 2014

I am pleased to present the President's report for the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc. for the 2013/2014 year.

As usual, the club held a monthly meeting with a speaker on the first Friday of the month except January, followed by an excursion, mostly on the Sunday following the meeting. General meeting attendance continues to be in the mid twenties, sometimes breaking the thirty barrier and it was pleasing to welcome some new members during the year. Meetings continue to be held at the S.M.B. Industry Training Centre, corner of Gillies and Gregory Streets, Wendouree.

The topics this year began in April with Gib Wettenhall, Chair of the Norman Wettenhall Trust talking about Connecting People to Landscape. In May Dr. Mary Gibson spoke about Lichens followed in June by Rod and Jan Orr telling us about Namibia and South Africa from their travels. Climate Change was addressed by Dr. Lawrie Wilson in July with Tania Loos giving a talk on Creatures of the Night in August. In a change from the scheduled program for September, Brenda Beck – Science tutor at the U3A gave a talk about Rocks and Minerals which she supported with numerous interesting specimens. The October meeting was a designated member's night and Ken Hammond illustrated the topic Birds of my Travels with pictures and descriptions of the areas where birds had been seen. November was the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture at which an audience of about 50 people heard John Arnott, Horticulturist with the Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne tell us about the development of those gardens under the topic *Where Horticulture meets Ecology*. In December we had one of our newer members, Dr. Peter Laird tell us about his work as an anthropologist with the topic *The*

Temoq: Ultimate Field Naturalists of the Malaysian Rainforest. The New Year began with long term member John Gregurke educating us about local eucalypt identification. To finish the club year we will view members images under the heading *Seascapes*.

Excursions started in April with a trip to the Linton Trust for Nature Block and Clarkesdale. This was followed in May by a bus trip to the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, and with Les Hanrahan leading a trip to look at fungi in June. In July we looked at the Canadian Forest and a picture in the newsletter showed a rugged up group looking at new growth on a former plantation block. In August it was off to Serendip sanctuary where we were fortunate to have one of the rangers talk to us and to have a Geelong Field Naturalists who knew the park well lead us. In September the excursion was to Sandon Forest and Rise and Shine Bushland Reserve rather than the listed Enfield Forest. Then October saw us in the Brisbane Ranges. We had Jane Marriot start the November excursion with a look at Barbys Lane in Creswick, and then the extensive work she has done on her home block before continuing to other locations around Kooroocheang. December was an afternoon/evening excursion starting at Jeanette Mitchell's home at Durham Lead where her property and adjacent reserve were explored before looking at other Durham Lead areas and finishing with tea at the Buninyong Botanic gardens. The February excursion was cancelled according to club policy as it was a total fire ban day which was disappointing as it was to follow John's presentation with local eucalypts being observed. The March excursion will also be varied from the syllabus to be closer to Ballarat.

A club camp was not held this year but many members attended the South East Australian Naturalists Network gatherings at Merricks on the Mornington Peninsula, hosted by the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club and at Numurka hosted by the Broken Creek Field Naturalists Club. As usual both were superbly organised with local people sharing their extensive knowledge by conducting memorable excursions supported by interesting evening activities. Many members also privately, travelled extensively.

I am again appreciative of the efforts of everybody who has helped in countless ways to the smooth running of the club, especially all committee members. Thanks to those who have led and written up excursions and speakers' talks at our meetings. Observations reported at meetings continue to add interest and allow members to contribute. It is good to see members keeping an eye on the environ-

ment and a special acknowledgment to John Gregurke for keeping us up to date with environmental matters needing attention and often representing the club. Fran Hanrahan has capably done the newsletter which keeps us informed as well as providing a record of our activities. Thank you to Fran for agreeing to again do this. Elspeth Swan and Carol Hall have indicated that the next year they will not be standing for the committee. Thank you to both for their excellent contribution. As well as being on the committee Elspeth completed two terms as president and a very special thanks to Carol Hall who has been involved with the committee for so long that my memory is inadequate when it comes to what she has done but includes a long stint as newsletter editor, formatting and printing of the syllabus for many years in addition to being secretary which recently included being the Public Officer as required by Consumer Affairs. A special thank you on behalf of everyone for her contributions.

Peter Dalman

**Mar 2014 Excursion - Macarthur Pk, Paul's wetland
& Upper Yarrowee**
lead by Peter Dalman

On Sunday 9th March 2014 eight members visited Macarthur Park wetlands in the morning followed by Paul's wetland in Dowling Street Wendouree. It was then to the Gong Reservoir reserve for lunch and an afternoon walk from there to Ditchfield Lane along the Yarrowee walking track. A car shuttle was used to return to the Gong.

Macarthur Park wetland was developed along the Burrumbeet Creek as part of the housing development. Fed by water from the Ballarat North sewerage treatment as well as runoff from the estate, there was a good amount of water in the ponds considering the time of year. With some years having elapsed since establishment plants were flourishing amongst rocks, around ponds, lining paths, obscuring the original creek and softening infrastructure. Twenty one bird species were noted with water birds, bush birds and introduced species which total was considerably less than the number of species observed when Roger Thomas led a similar walk for the Australian Plant Society three weeks before. The walk set off anticlockwise from the car park and one of the early observations was the amount of woolly scale on vegetation. Along the way, plants along the edge

and in the water were noted and water could be heard flowing through the pits into the lakes. A stop for morning tea back at the cars and it was past midday by the time Paul's wetland was visited. This wetland was also a constructed flood retention area which elicited 14 bird species in a very short time, six of which had not been seen earlier.

The afternoon was a pleasant one-way walk and although no water was flowing there were a few wet areas. In the more sheltered areas it was nice to see a number of blue wrens and some observed a white browed scrub wren. However there was also a considerable amount of blackberry along the streamside, some willow and elderberry flowering. Remembering the time when the club had a working bee to remove weed mat that was strangling trees, it was noted that there were still a considerable number of trees with weed mat up to their trunks but they did not appear to be suffering. Perhaps the powers of observation had dulled a bit towards the end of the day as only 9 birds species were recorded for this part of the day.

Peter Dalman

Bird lists for the excursion

Macarthur Park: Little pied cormorant, Australasian coot, wood swallow, black duck, Australasian grebe, blue wren, magpie lark, masked lapwing, moorhen, grey teal, little raven, white browed scrub wren, chestnut teal, black swan, crimson rosella, grey fantail, blackbird, white faced heron, red browed finch, starling, bronze wing pigeon.

Paul's wetland: sparrow, coot, starling, white ibis, mallard duck, hardhead duck, hoary headed grebe, blackbird, little pied cormorant, white faced heron, little black cormorant, purple swamphen, wood duck, magpie lark.

Yarrowee trail: grey fantail, new Holland honeyeater, grey fantail, white browed scrub wren, kookaburra, bronze wing pigeon.

John Gregurke

*Wed 14 May: **Eucalypts of Ballarat**, speaker John Gregurke.
APS meeting, 7.30pm at Robert Clarke Centre, Botanic Gardens.
If you missed the February meeting you may like to come along.*

Excerpts for Club Meeting Minutes, 7 March, 2014

Attendance: The President welcomed 27 members & friends.

Apologies: Zelda Martin, Denis & Elizabeth Thurgood, Bill Murphy, Nina Netherway, Douglas Menin, M & J Cuttle, A & C Baulch.

Correspondence IN: Enquiry from the USA re use of an image on our blog. Forwarded to Les Hanrahan. P.O. Box Renewal (\$107)

OUT: John Gregurke replied to Jeff Rootes re Canadian Corridor Forum to say that we support the concept of a Multi-use Forest Park

Peter Dalman agreed to revisit the Charities paperwork that is to be re-sent by the Australian Charities & Not-for-Profit Commission.

General Business Les Hanrahan noted a meeting Mar13 re a proposal for a Koala Trail between Mts Warrenheip. & Buninyong.

Show & Tell/Reports *(For lack of space not all reports below)*

Paul Norquay recorded 22.5mm of rain and 173mm of evaporation in Jan, and 15mm of rain and 169mm of evaporation in Feb. The rainfall was less than half of the 30 year average rainfall in both months. He also saw a Blue-tongued lizard drinking water from a low dish, a copperhead snake a couple of times in the vegetable garden, a Wedge-tailed Eagle flying overhead. Les Hanrahan spotted Blue-banded bees on Fuchsia bushes on his property in Bungaree. Mike Sorrell brought in weighty fruit of a Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) from Botanical Gardens. Jane Marriott saw a Flame Robin and approx. 10 other species of birds visiting her bird-bath in Broomfield and an Eastern Spinebill feeding each morning on the flowers of a Red Hot Poker. Wayne M^cGuire saw a Black Kite, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, White-throated Needletails and 1 Fork-tailed Swift from the great vantage point of the fire tower in Buninyong. John Morrish saw 16 Great Crested Grebes and female Great Crested Grebe with 2 chicks on Lake Wendouree. John Mildren noted a Grey Butcherbird on the corner of Ascot and Eyre Street. Val Hocking saw several Bandicoots at the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens along with an echidna drinking from a puddle in a track through the bush area at the same Gardens. Adrienne S sent along a book about the Black Saturday Bushfires. Emily Noble reported on her first ever sighting of a orange mud wasp, more than 3cm with a wide black band on its abdomen stuffing what appeared to be a looper caterpillar into its small clay nest on a milky quartz rock to feed its larvae. Ken Hammond reported seeing a Whistling Kite, a couple of Little Black Cormorants and Red-kneed Dotterels at Paul's Wetland.

CALENDAR 2014

April

Fri 4 *Wonders! Wildflowers of WA Wheatbelt*- Elizabeth
Thurgood, club member

Sun 6 *Woody Yallock Catchment Group* - Alice Knight

May 2-5 SEANA Marysville Camp

May 27 Committee meeting at J Mildren's

June

Fri 6 *Cryptogams: vital role of smallest photosynthesisers* -
Dr Graeme Ambrose Environmental scientist

Sat 7 *Fungi* Venue TBA - Les Hanrahan, club member

Committee

President Peter Dalman

Vice –President..... Fran Hanrahan

Secretary Emily Noble

Treasurer..... Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman
John Gregurke

Val Hocking
John Mildren

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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